



***Update on the 2008 recipient of the
Bulkley Valley Research Centre - Irving Fox Memorial Scholarship for
Natural Resources Research and Management***

Erin Rechsteiner was the 2008 recipient of the Bulkley Valley Research Centre's Irving Fox Memorial Scholarship for Natural Resources Research Management. She went on to graduate with a Bachelor of Science, specializing in aquatic biology and geography, from Vancouver Island University later that year.

From there, Erin headed to New Zealand for three months to participate in a study of dusky dolphin behaviour in the presence and absence of motor vessels. She then returned to B.C. to do salmon biology work, counting sea lice on Pacific salmon in the Broughton Archipelago. She spent a summer working as an ecological reserve warden in Robson Bight on Vancouver Island and then began her study as a Master of Science student at the University of British Columbia.

Her master's involved measuring resting metabolism of three Pacific white-sided dolphins at the Vancouver Aquarium and then modelling the total energetic requirements of wild dolphins. From there she estimated the prey biomass required by wild dolphins on the B.C. coast and then worked up a 50-year data set for spatial analyses and identification of dolphin hot spots and seasonal migrations on the B.C. coast. Erin also headed to the north B.C. coast to necropsy stomachs from stranded animals to figure out what they were eating, and worked in the wild with dolphins in the Strait of Georgia, following them after foraging events and collecting scraps of their food.

Erin's results were, essentially, that the north coast is a good spot for these dolphins and that they require about 13 percent of their bodyweight in high-energy fish (herring, sardine and salmon are most prevalent) daily — about 15,000 calories a day for a non-reproductive 95-kg adult. They move into inshore waters in high numbers in winter, concurrent with the herring spawn, and Erin suspects their distribution is prey-linked.

Erin defended her thesis in May 2012 before starting a contract with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, working on some local questions about humpback whale populations. She has been trying to return to northern B.C., by applying to jobs with the provincial government in Smithers and with Haida Fisheries.